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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: LOCAL LEADERS ALONG IRANIAN BORDER:
GOOD SECURITY BUT LACKING SERVICES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
) .

11. (U) This is a PRT Wasit reporting cable.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Local leaders, in towns along and near the Iraq- Iran border, report stable security situation voiced concerns about government services and local economic development. The upcoming provincial elections provoked criticism of the current government and skepticism that anything would change. The August redeployment of the Georgian Brigade from Wasit province enabled greater cooperation among PRT officers, Coalition Forces, and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), as U.S. Forces and Iraqi Army units established Joint Security Stations (JSS) in former Georgian positions. END SUMMARY.

GEORGIAN MOVE INCREASES IRAQI SECURITY PRESENCE

13. (C//REL USA, ACGU) The early August redeployment of Georgian forces from Iraq has produced new cooperation between ISF and coalition forces in Wasit province. U.S. forces partnered with Iraqi Army (IA) units now provide a security presence, at JSSs, outside the Wasit towns of Badrah/Jessan in northeast Wasit and the city of Sheikh Sa'ad in the southeast of the province. A third JSS, where Iraqi Police (IP) partner with U.S. forces is located near the central Wasit city of Numaniyah. At these sites, Iraqi security and U.S. Forces live and work together under conditions that aid close cooperation. Mentoring in the field takes on an ever greater significance as Wasit moves closer to its Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) date of October 30.

SECURITY GOOD, BUT SERVICES LACKING

14. (C//REL USA, ACGU) On September 23, PRT Wasit traveled to a JSS in northeast Wasit and met with Ali Hadi al Meshoeh, Mayor of Badrah, and Naema Khadun, Mayor of Jessan. Badrah and Jessan are small but strategic towns near Wasit's border with Iran. The two mayors agreed that security in the area was good. They attributed this in large part to Iran's desire to continue its cross-border trade and to facilitate Iranian pilgrims, moving through the area to the Shia religious shrines in Najaf and Karbala. The mayors requested Coalition assistance in improving the supply of drinking and irrigation water for their towns. They reported no success in getting the provincial government to fund repairs of a defunct irrigation system that previously brought irrigation water to Badrah and Jessan from the Tigris.

15. (C//REL USA, ACGU) The next day, outside the city of Sheikh Sa'ad, PRT Wasit met with Sheikh Sa'ad's Mayor Anwar Attiya E'ssa. E'ssa also requested assistance in providing his city with clean drinking water and complained of the government's lack of investment in Sheikh Sa'ad's predominately agricultural economy. According to Anwar, the provincial government has focused on essential services in the cities but has done little or nothing for the

agricultural economy. This is hurting residents and farmers who now have large areas of formerly irrigated farm land lying fallow due to a lack of irrigation repairs.

PESSIMISM ON ELECTIONS

¶6. (C//REL USA, ACGU) When questioned about the next provincial elections, both al Meshoeh and Khadun were pessimistic, predicting that the leading religious parties would find some unscrupulous way to retain power. Badrah's mayor, Ali Hadi, claimed that the ruling parties are now giving gifts to schools, but only because the election is nearing. Despite his initial pessimism, Ali Hadi, a retired Army Officer from the provincial capital Al Kut, intends to run for the Provincial Council as a member of a secular party funded by Prince Rabia Mohammad Ali Habib Rabia, an influential tribal leader of a confederation with mixed Sunni/Shia membership. Jessan's mayor, an independent, added that each candidate backed by a militia will win, and predicted that ISCI and Badr will win as they did in 2005. Mayor E'ssa of Sheikh Sa'ad, nominally an independent in a strongly Sadrist area, stated that most people do not think the government is effective. He expects the election will bring a major change to the Provincial Council, with nearly all the seats turning over to new people.

¶7. (C//REL USA, ACGU) COMMENT: The departure of the Georgian Brigade, while initially disruptive, has paved the way for greater cooperation with the Iraqi Security Forces and local leadership at a critical time for the province. Iraqi security forces are gaining greater exposure to the U.S.

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military and increasing their capacity within the area. This will likely prove beneficial for the IA and IP as they transition to PIC, and to the PRT as it may now expand its coverage of the province leading up to the provincial elections. The reactions received by the PRT during recent engagements have been typical of the statements of many of the PRT's regular contacts. There seems to be a near universal dislike of the present government dominated by religious parties (most commonly referred to as Iranian religious parties). At the same time, the local leaders are also pessimistic and expect that, despite their failure to provide good governance and services since coming to power in 2005, the religious parties will remain in power after the next elections. END
COMMENT.

CROCKER